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2001HANOI02740 - CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL PTQ7127

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ACTION EAP-00

INFO LOG-00 NP-00 ACQ-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 DS-00 FBIE-00
VC-00 H-01 TEDE-00 INR-00 LAB-01 VCE-00 NSAE-00
SS-00 DSCC-00 DRL-02 NFAT-00 SAS-00 /004W
-----319BBA 190724Z /38

FM AMEMBASSY HANOI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4463
INFO NSC WASHDC
USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI
ASEAN COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L HANOI 002740

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EAP/BCLTV AND DRL/RF

E.O. 12958: DECL 10/18/2011
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PINS](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [VM](#) [RELFREE](#) [HUMANR](#) [ETMIN](#) [BTA](#)
SUBJECT: POTUS VISIT AND BTA STIMULATED PROTESTANT
- REGISTRATION PROCESS

REF: HANOI 2591

1. (U) CLASSIFIED BY POLITICAL COUNSELOR SCOTT D.
BELLARD, REASON 1.5 (D)

2. (C) THEN-PRESIDENT CLINTON'S VISIT TO VIETNAM IN
NOVEMBER 200 CAUSED THE SRV TO FACILITATE PROTESTANT
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CHURCH EFFORTS TO REGISTER, ACCORDING TO PASTOR TINH,
WHO DESCRIBED HIMSELF AS THE CHAIRMAN OF VIET NAM GOOD
NEWS MISSIONS (STRICTLY PROTECT). TINH, WHO MET WITH
POLOFF ON OCTOBER 11 IN HANOI, SAID THAT GVN RELIGION
OFFICIALS LAST YEAR BEGAN TRAVELLING AROUND THE
COUNTRYSIDE ENCOURAGING AND ASSISTING PROTESTANT GROUPS
IN BEGIN LEGALIZING THEIR STATUS. HE CLAIMED THAT A
SYMPATHETIC OFFICIAL OF THE GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE ON
RELIGION TOLD HIM RECENTLY THAT THE SRV HAD LAST YEAR
DIRECTED THE COMMITTEE TO SEEK OUT PROTESTANT GROUPS
AND TRY TO REGISTER THEM IN ORDER TO "HAVE SOMETHING TO
SHOW THE AMERICAN PRESIDENT" AND TO INFLUENCE FAVORABLE
CONSIDERATION OF THE BTA. TINH ADDED THAT WHEN IT
BECAME CLEAR THAT PRESIDENT CLINTON WOULD NOT SIGN THE
BTA DURING HIS VISIT, GOVERNMENT INTEREST IN CHURCH
REGISTRATION TAPERED OFF.

3. (C) AT LEAST TWO PROTESTANT CHURCHES ARE STILL IN
THE REGISTRATION PROCESS, INCLUDING HIS, TINH SAID.
HOWEVER, GVN OFFICIALS ARE NO LONGER GOING OUT OF THEIR
WAY TO FACILITATE THE PROCESS, HE ADDED. TINH
EXPRESSED A GENERAL BELIEF THAT A "HOLD" ON THE BTA
MIGHT HAVE HAD SOME FURTHER BENEFICIAL INFLUENCE ON
CHURCH REGISTRATION. PASTOR TINH SAID THAT HE BELIEVED
THAT CONGRESSIONAL CONSIDERATION OF THE VIETNAM HUMAN
RIGHTS ACT (VHRA) COULD SIMILARLY INDUCE PROGRESS ON
NEW CHURCH REGISTRATION, ADDING A HOPE THAT THE VHRA BE
APPROVED.

4. (C) COMMENT: MUCH AS THE GVN DECRIES FOREIGN
INTERFERENCE IN ITS INTERNAL AFFAIRS, IT REMAINS
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SENSITIVE TO OUTSIDE PRESSURE AND CONCERN. REFTTEL
NOTED THE IMPACT OF THE VHRA VOTE ON THE BAPTIST
REGISTRATION PROCESS. WHILE IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO LINK
DIRECTLY THE MARCH 2001 OFFICIAL REGISTRATION OF THE
SOUTHERN EVANGELICAL CHURCH TO THE POTUS VISIT OR BTA
CONSIDERATION, GVN POLICY TOWARD A MORE INCLUSIVE
APPROACH TO UNAUTHORIZED RELIGIOUS GROUPS IS CLEARLY
NOT IMMUNE TO THE EBBS AND FLOWS OF POLICY
DELIBERATIONS ABROAD, ESPECIALLY IN WASHINGTON.
PORTER

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